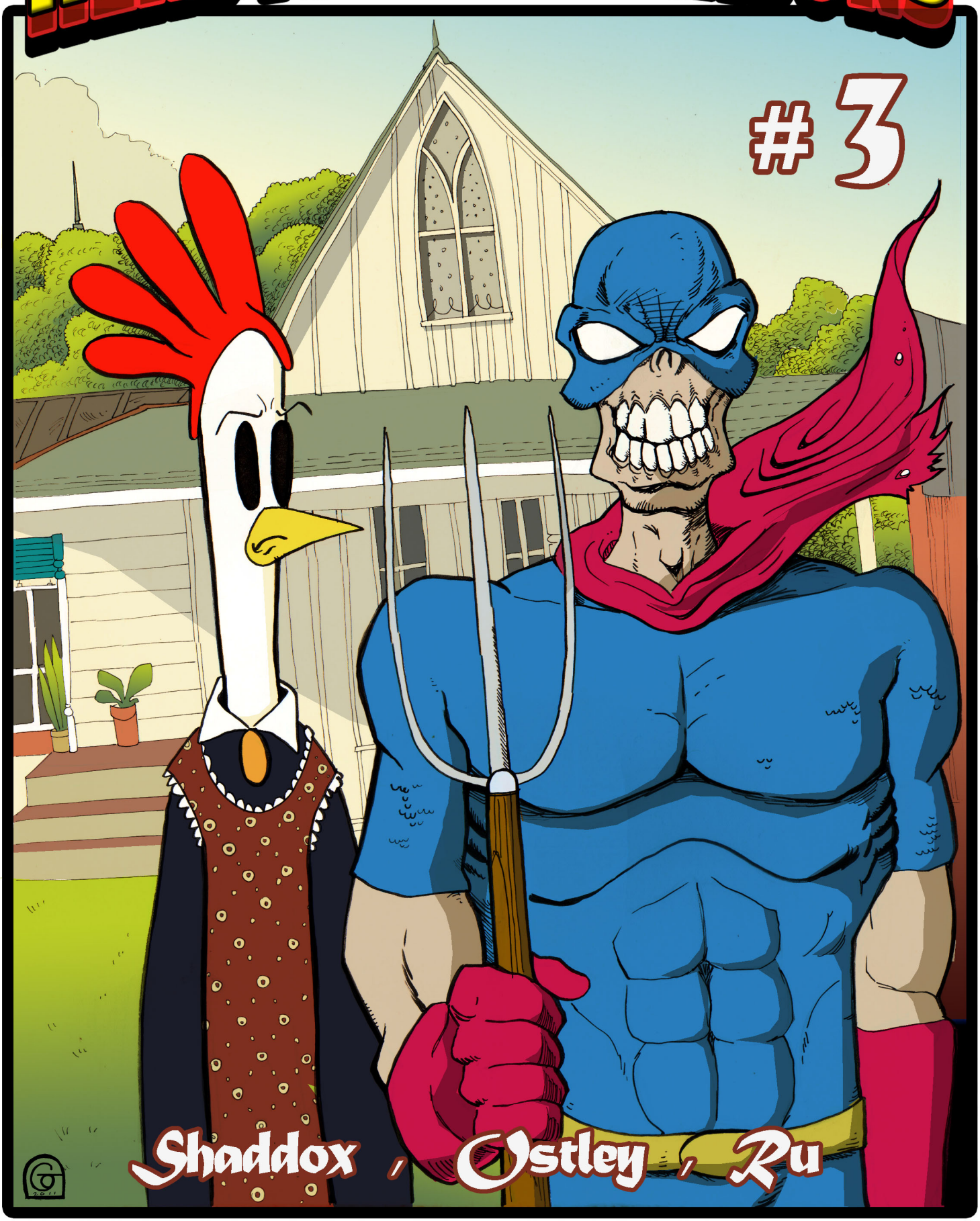
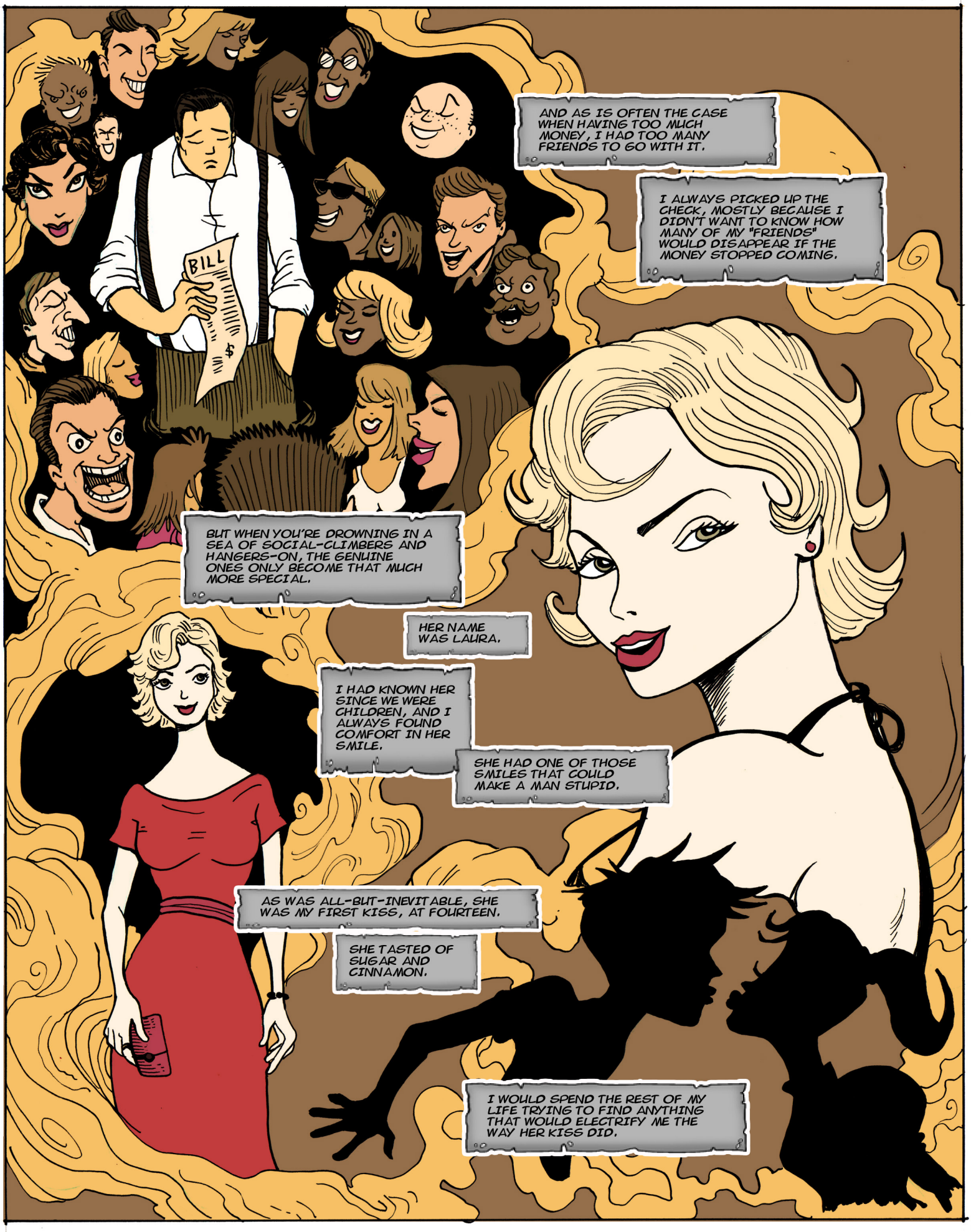
HERO ACTION PERSONS



I'M NOT GOING TO PRETEND I DON'T ENJOY BEING WEALTHY.
IF BEING WEALTHY DIDN'T HAVE AN UP SIDE, PEOPLE WOULDN'T DEVOTE THEIR LIVES TRYING TO GET THERE.
MY WEALTH CAME FROM MY FATHER. HE WAS A DOCTOR.
EVEN A DOCTOR'S ESTATE WOULDN'T COVER THE KIND OF LIFESTYLE HE LEFT ME...
BUT HE HAD SUPPLEMENTED HIS INCOME WITH A LOT OF INSURANCE FRAUD.
PRESCRIPTION
HE WAS ALSO PRETTY LIBERAL WITH HIS PRESCRIPTION PAD.
IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH SOMEONE WILL PAY WHEN THEIR OWN DOCTOR WON'T WRITE THEM A 'SCRIPT FOR XANAX OR OXYCODONE.


AND AS IS OFTEN THE CASE WHEN HAVING TOO MUCH MONEY, I HAD TOO MANY FRIENDS TO GO WITH IT.
I ALWAYS PICKED UP THE CHECK, MOSTLY BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW HOW MANY OF MY "FRIENDS" WOULD DISAPPEAR IF THE MONEY STOPPED COMING.
BILL
$
BUT WHEN YOU'RE DROWNING IN A SEA OF SOCIAL-CLIMBERS AND HANGERS-ON, THE GENUINE ONES ONLY BECOME THAT MUCH MORE SPECIAL.
HER NAME WAS LAURA.
I HAD KNOWN HER SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN, AND I ALWAYS FOUND COMFORT IN HER SMILE.
SHE HAD ONE OF THOSE SMILES THAT COULD MAKE A MAN STUPID.
AS WAS ALL-BUT-INEVITABLE, SHE WAS MY FIRST KISS, AT FOURTEEN.
SHE TASTED OF SUGAR AND CINNAMON.
I WOULD SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE TRYING TO FIND ANYTHING THAT WOULD ELECTRIFY ME THE WAY HER KISS DID.

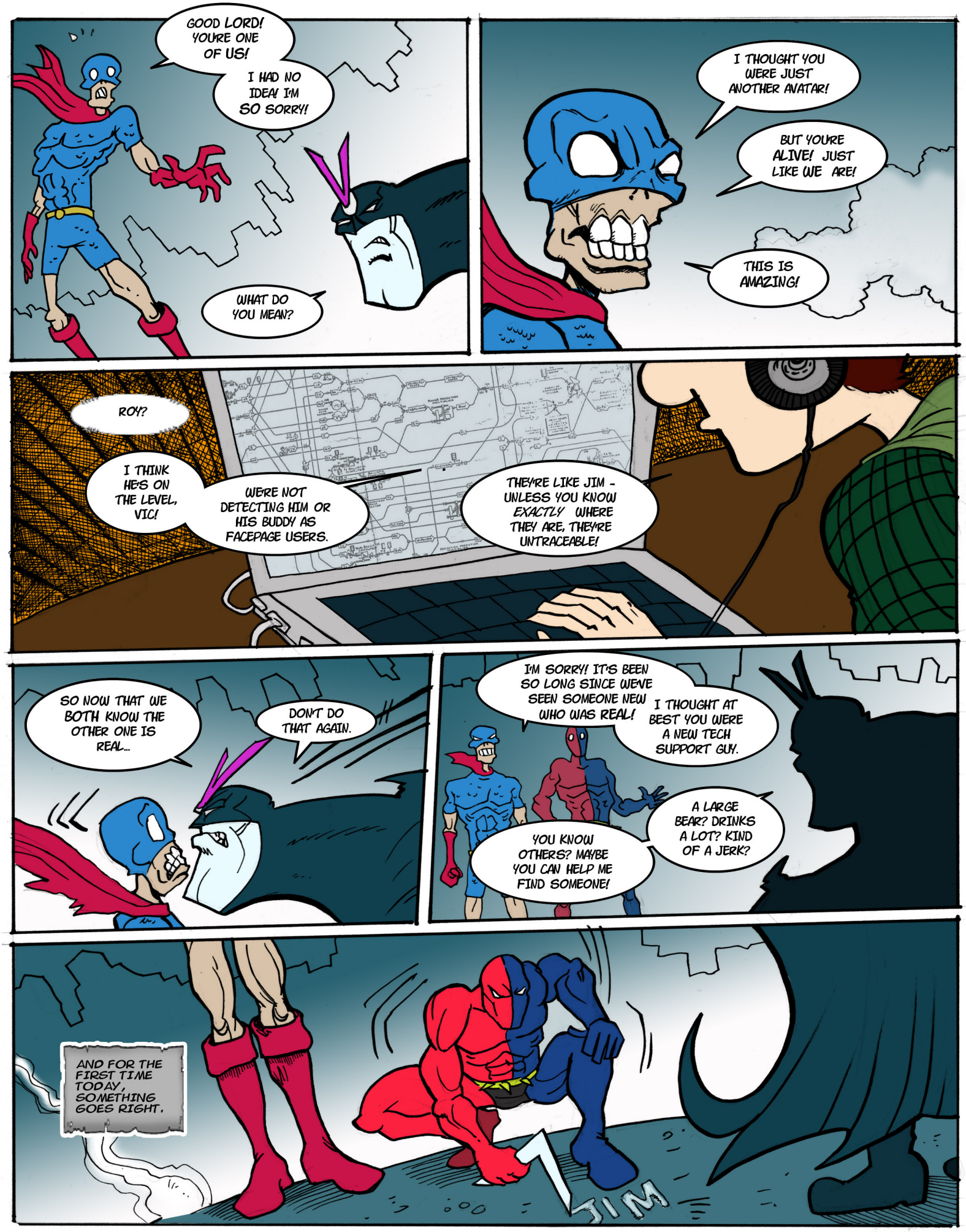
HERO ACTION PERSONS

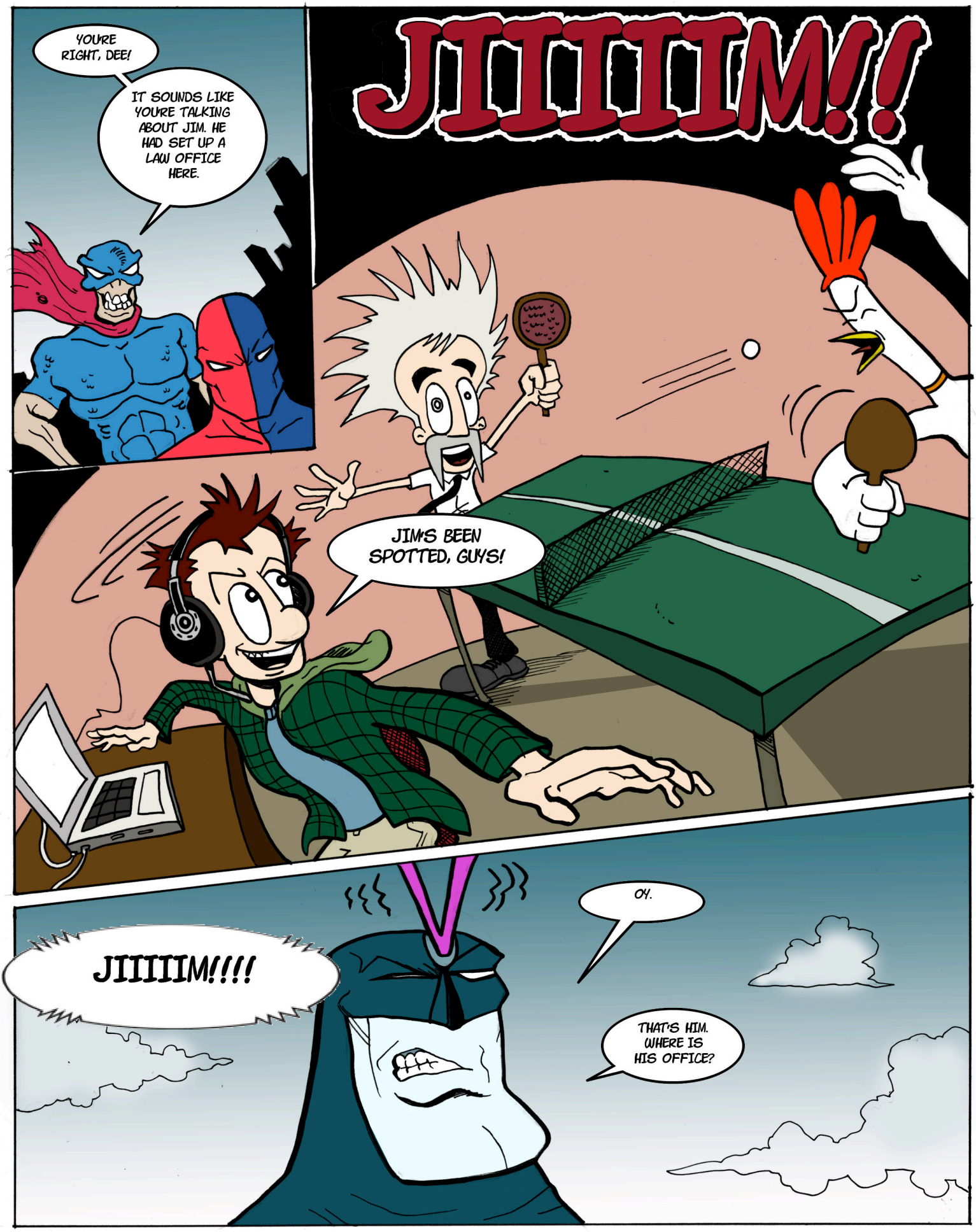
THE SOCIAL (NETWORKING SITE) WAR SAGA PART 3:

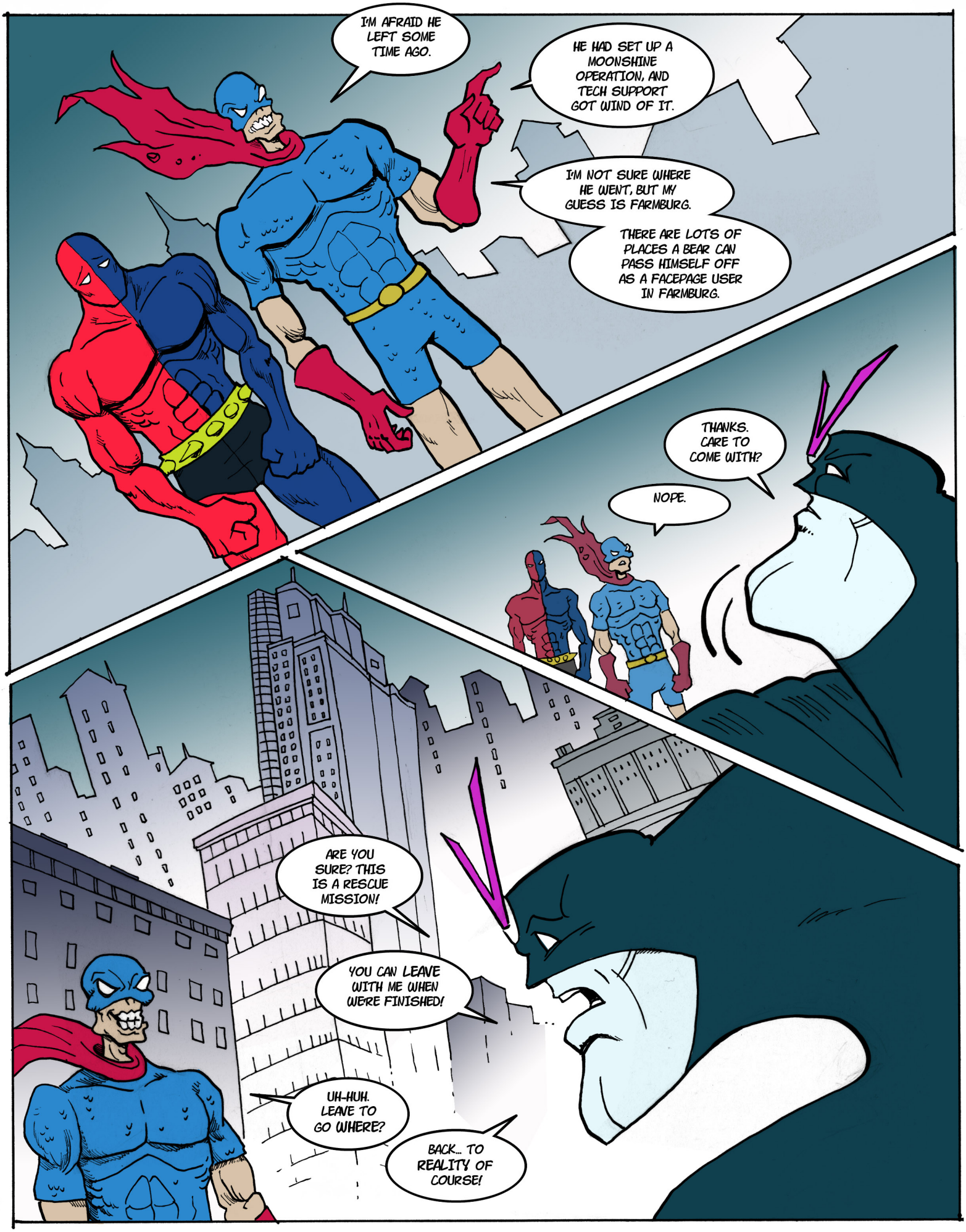
"A HOT CUP OF VIRTUAL DEATH"

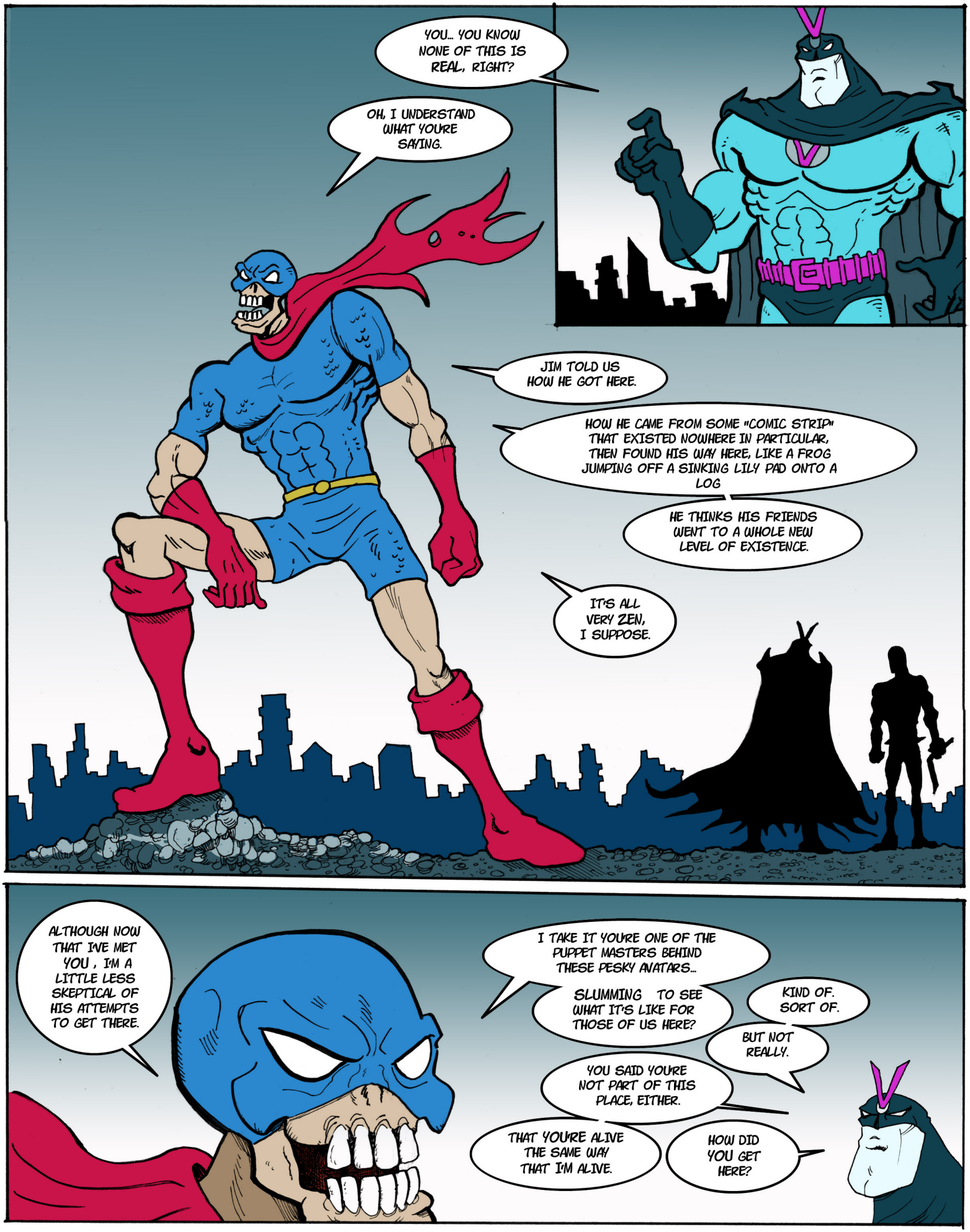
A. D. SHADDOX: SCRIPT/LETTERS GABE OSTLEY: PENCILS/INKS RU: COLORS/FX

KA-WANGITY!!
AND... THANK YOU.
OKAY. OW.
VIC? ARE YOU OKAY?
I'LL BE FINE. WHAT DID HE DO TO ME?
I'M... NOT SURE!
HE WAS... DISRUPTING YOUR EXISTENCE SOMEHOW!

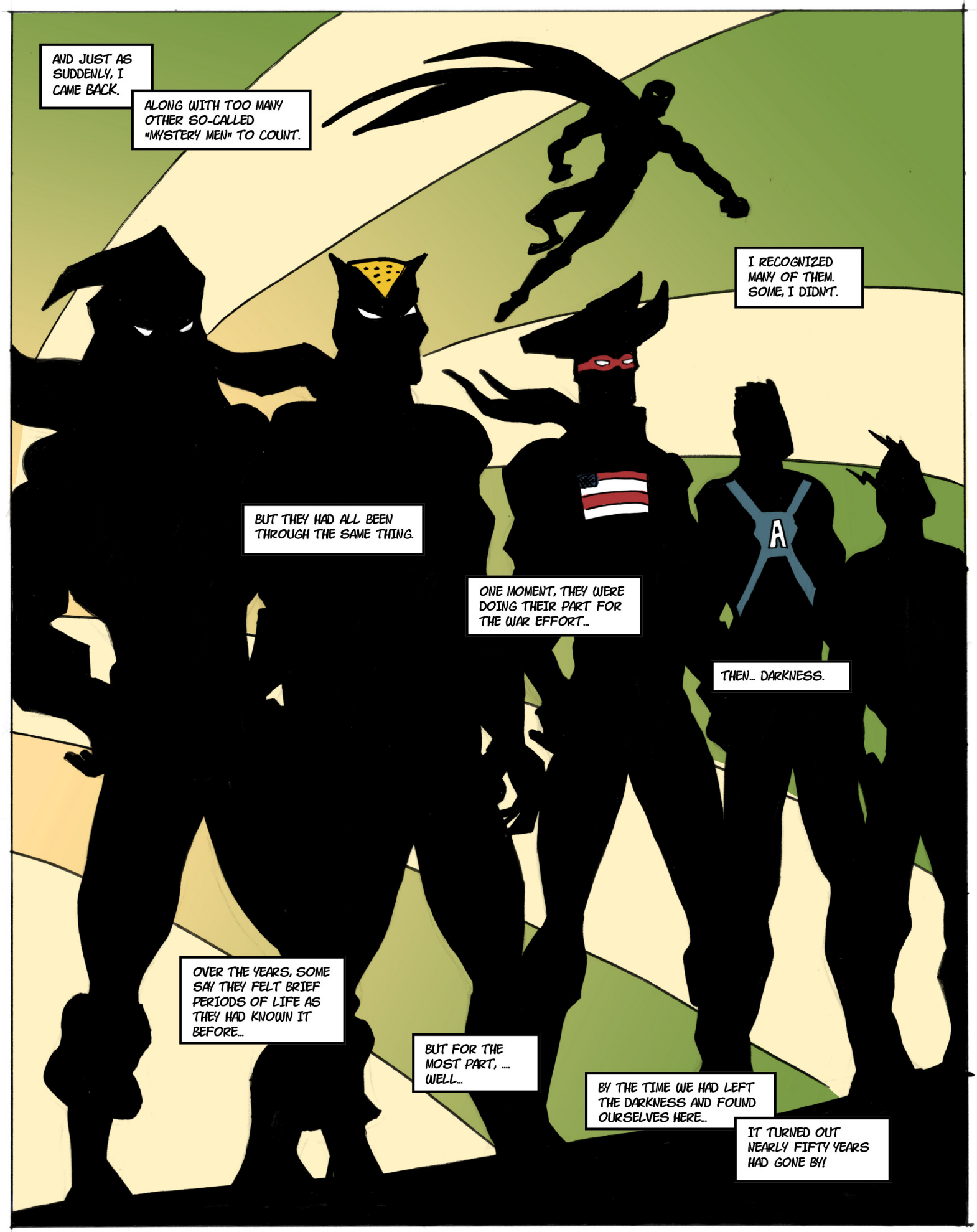

GOOD LORD! YOU'RE ONE OF US!
I HAD NO IDEA! I'M SO SORRY!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE JUST ANOTHER AVATAR!
BUT YOU'RE ALIVE! JUST LIKE WE ARE!
THIS IS AMAZING!
ROY?
I THINK HE'S ON THE LEVEL, VIC!
WE'RE NOT DETECTING HIM OR HIS BUDDY AS FACEPAGE USERS.
THEY'RE LIKE JIM - UNLESS YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHERE THEY ARE, THEY'RE UNTRACEABLE!
SO NOW THAT WE BOTH KNOW THE OTHER ONE IS REAL...
DON'T DO THAT AGAIN.
I'M SORRY! IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE WE'VE SEEN SOMEONE NEW WHO WAS REAL!
I THOUGHT AT BEST YOU WERE A NEW TECH SUPPORT GUY.
A LARGE BEAR? DRINKS A LOT? KIND OF A JERK?
YOU KNOW OTHERS? MAYBE YOU CAN HELP ME FIND SOMEONE!
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY, SOMETHING GOES RIGHT.
JIM

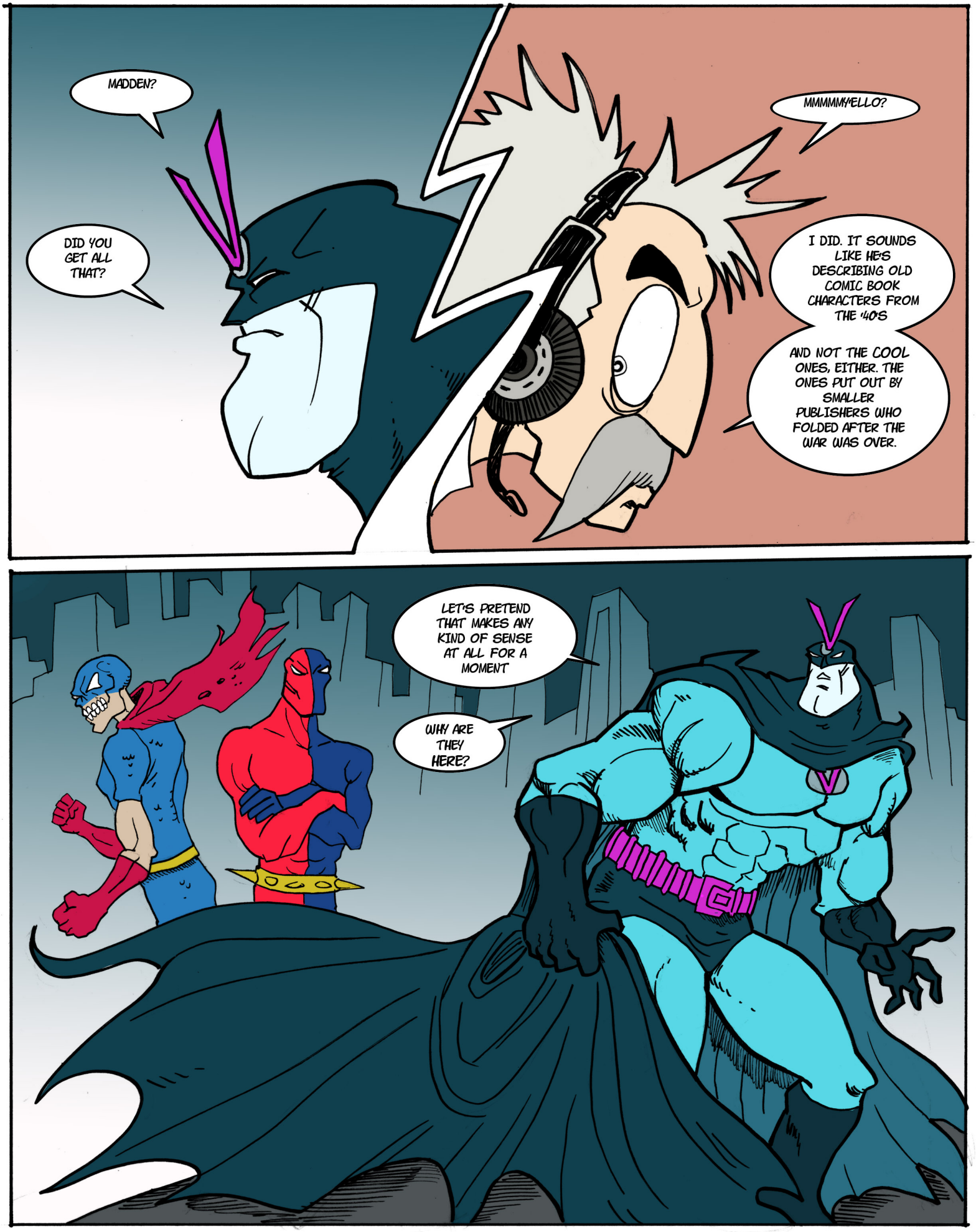

YOU'RE RIGHT, DEE!
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT JIM. HE HAD SET UP A LAW OFFICE HERE.
JIIIIIIM!!
JIM'S BEEN SPOTTED, GUYS!
JIIIIIM!!!!
OY.
THAT'S HIM. WHERE IS HIS OFFICE?


I'M AFRAID HE LEFT SOME TIME AGO.
HE HAD SET UP A MOONSHINE OPERATION, AND TECH SUPPORT GOT WIND OF IT.
I'M NOT SURE WHERE HE WENT, BUT MY GUESS IS FARMBURG.
THERE ARE LOTS OF PLACES A BEAR CAN PASS HIMSELF OFF AS A FACEPAGE USER IN FARMBURG.
THANKS. CARE TO COME WITH?
NOPE.
ARE YOU SURE? THIS IS A RESCUE MISSION!
YOU CAN LEAVE WITH ME WHEN WE'RE FINISHED!
UH-HUH. LEAVE TO GO WHERE?
BACK... TO REALITY, OF COURSE!


YOU... YOU KNOW NONE OF THIS IS REAL, RIGHT?
OH, I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.
JIM TOLD US HOW HE GOT HERE.
HOW HE CAME FROM SOME "COMIC STRIP" THAT EXISTED NOWHERE IN PARTICULAR, THEN FOUND HIS WAY HERE, LIKE A FROG JUMPING OFF A SINKING LILY PAD ONTO A LOG
HE THINKS HIS FRIENDS WENT TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL OF EXISTENCE.
IT'S ALL VERY ZEN, I SUPPOSE.
ALTHOUGH NOW THAT I'VE MET YOU, I'M A LITTLE LESS SKEPTICAL OF HIS ATTEMPTS TO GET THERE.
I TAKE IT YOU'RE ONE OF THE PUPPET MASTERS BEHIND THESE PESKY AVATARS...
SLUMMING TO SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE FOR THOSE OF US HERE?
KIND OF. SORT OF.
BUT NOT REALLY.
YOU SAID YOU'RE NOT PART OF THIS PLACE, EITHER.
THAT YOU'RE ALIVE THE SAME WAY THAT I'M ALIVE.
HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

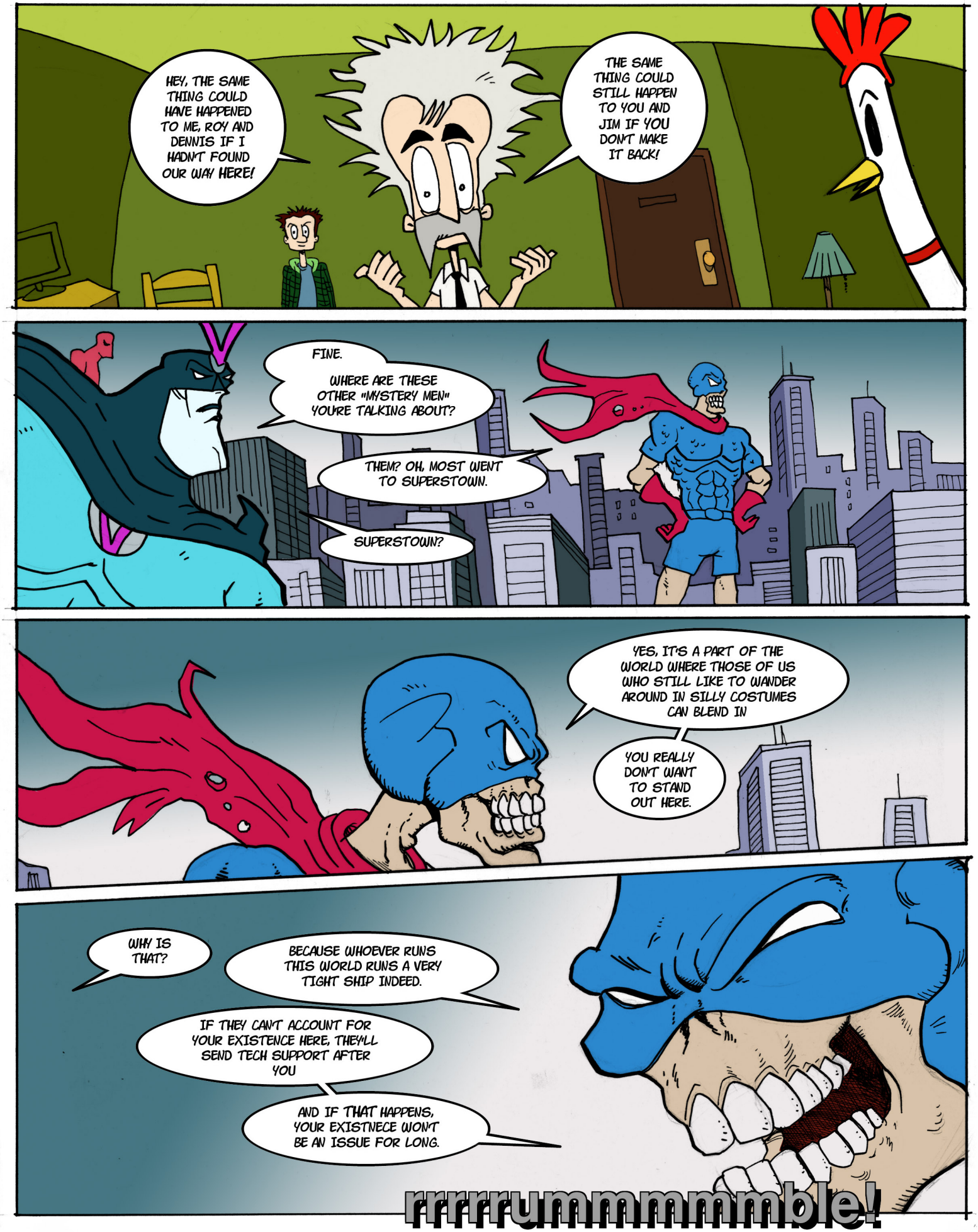
TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW FOR SURE.
13
ONE DAY, I WAS FIGHTING THE THIRD REICH AND CRIMINALS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF AMERICA'S COLLECTIVE DISTRACTION AT WINNING THE WAR AGAINST THE AXIS POWERS, THEN...
...NOTHING.
I ACTUALLY THOUGHT I HAD BEEN KILLED AND SIMPLY HADN'T SEEN IT COMING


AND JUST AS SUDDENLY, I CAME BACK.
ALONG WITH TOO MANY OTHER SO-CALLED "MYSTERY MEN" TO COUNT.
I RECOGNIZED MANY OF THEM. SOME, I DIDN'T.
BUT THEY HAD ALL BEEN THROUGH THE SAME THING.
ONE MOMENT, THEY WERE DOING THEIR PART FOR THE WAR EFFORT...
THEN... DARKNESS.
OVER THE YEARS, SOME SAY THEY FELT BRIEF PERIODS OF LIFE AS THEY HAD KNOWN IT BEFORE...
BUT FOR THE MOST PART, ... WELL...
BY THE TIME WE HAD LEFT THE DARKNESS AND FOUND OURSELVES HERE...
IT TURNED OUT NEARLY FIFTY YEARS HAD GONE BY!

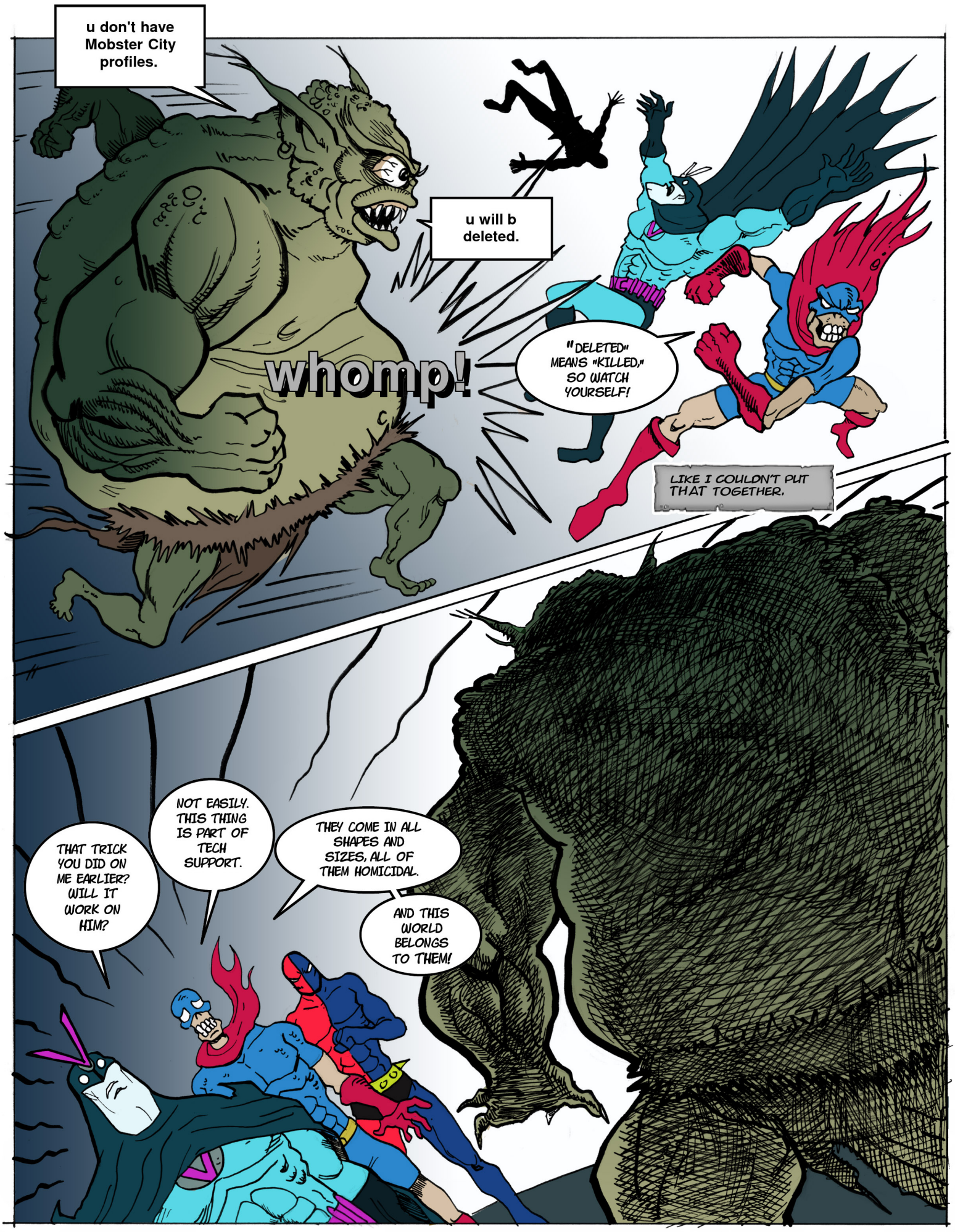

MADDEN?
DID YOU GET ALL THAT?
MMMMMMYELLO?
I DID. IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S DESCRIBING OLD COMIC BOOK CHARACTERS FROM THE '40'S
AND NOT THE COOL ONES, EITHER. THE ONES PUT OUT BY SMALLER PUBLISHERS WHO FOLDED AFTER THE WAR WAS OVER.
LET'S PRETEND THAT MAKES ANY KIND OF SENSE AT ALL FOR A MOMENT
WHY ARE THEY HERE?

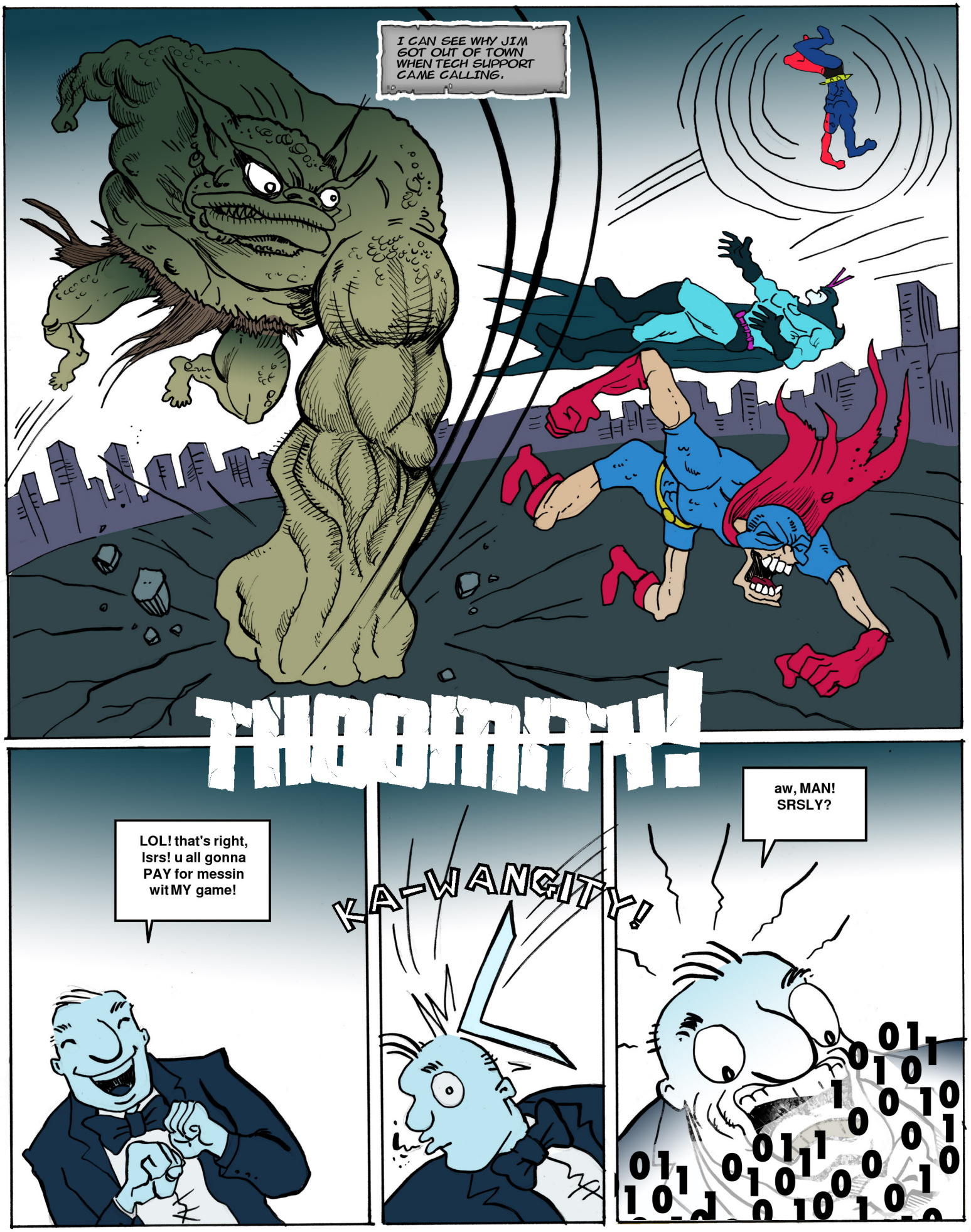
BASED ON THE TIMELINE HE'S GIVING, I'D SAY THEY FADED BACK INTO EXISTENCE WHEN THE INTERNET BECAME MORE COMMONPLACE AND A BUNCH OF NERDS STARTED REMEMBERING THEM!
THE GEEKS STARTED WRITING ABOUT THEM AGAIN AND THEY WERE "REBORN," AS IT WERE, IN CYBERSPACE!
THAT'S INSANE! THEIR COMIC BOOKS GET CANCELLED, THEY DISAPPEAR. THEN SOMEONE STARTS WRITING ABOUT THEM AND THEY'RE ALIVE SOMEHOW?
WHO IS TO SAY WHAT THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE IS?
COULDN'T WE ALL FADE FROM REALITY IF GOD BLINKED?

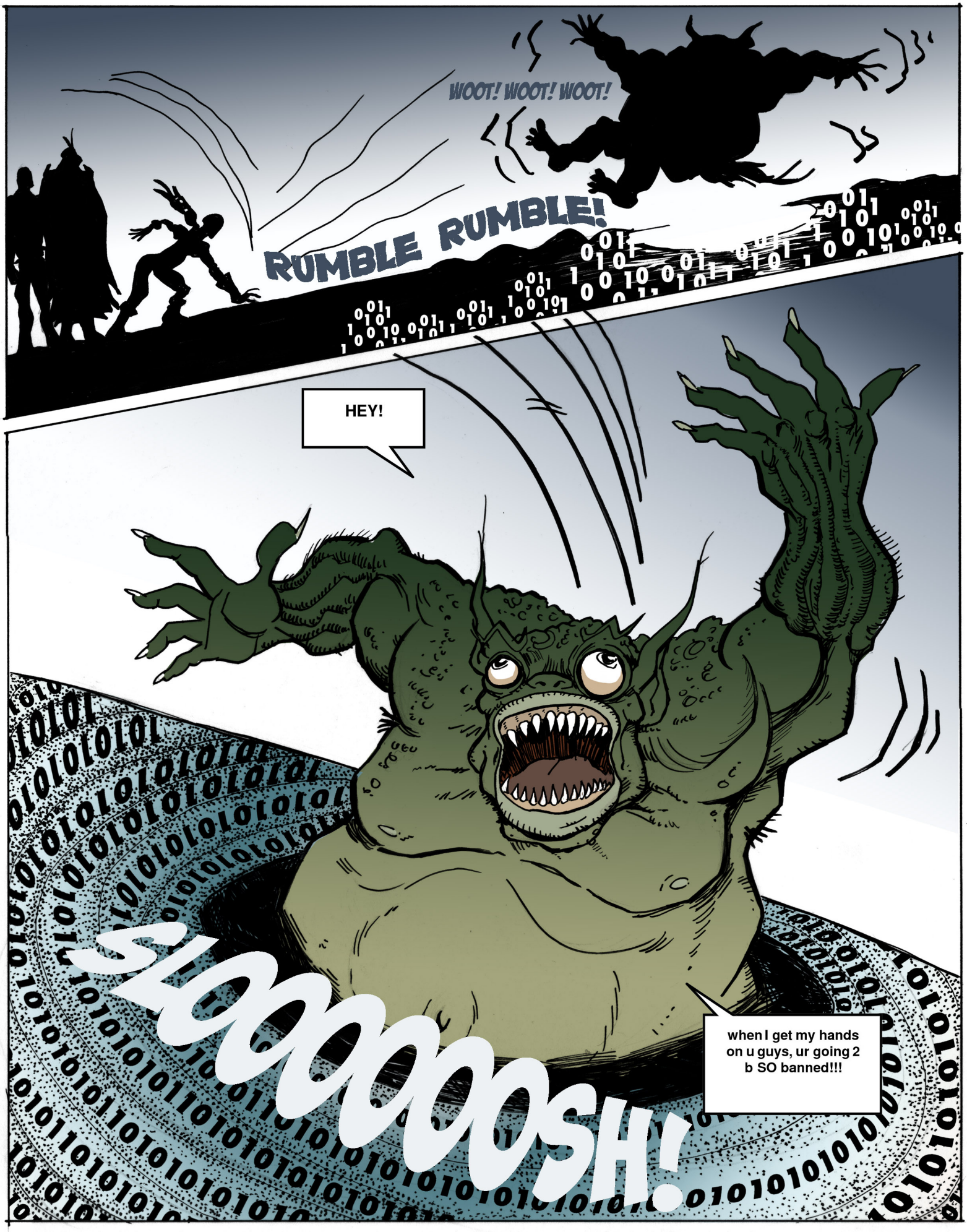
WHA...?
WHO IS THIS?!
MY NAME IS "STEVE," SIR.
I AM COVERING THE COMMUNICATIONS DEVICE WHILE ROY IS USING THE WASHROOM
. . .
I AM JUST SAYING SIRE, THAT WE ONLY KNOW WHAT OUR SENSES TELL US, AND WE ARE THEREFORE LIMITED BY WHAT WE CAN PERCEIVE.
ISN'T IT POSSIBLE, NO MATTER HOW REAL OUR LIVES MAY SEEM, THAT WE ARE PART OF SOME OTHER BEING'S TELEVISION SHOW OR COMIC BOOK FOR ALL WE KNOW?
NOW THAT'S JUST STUPID.

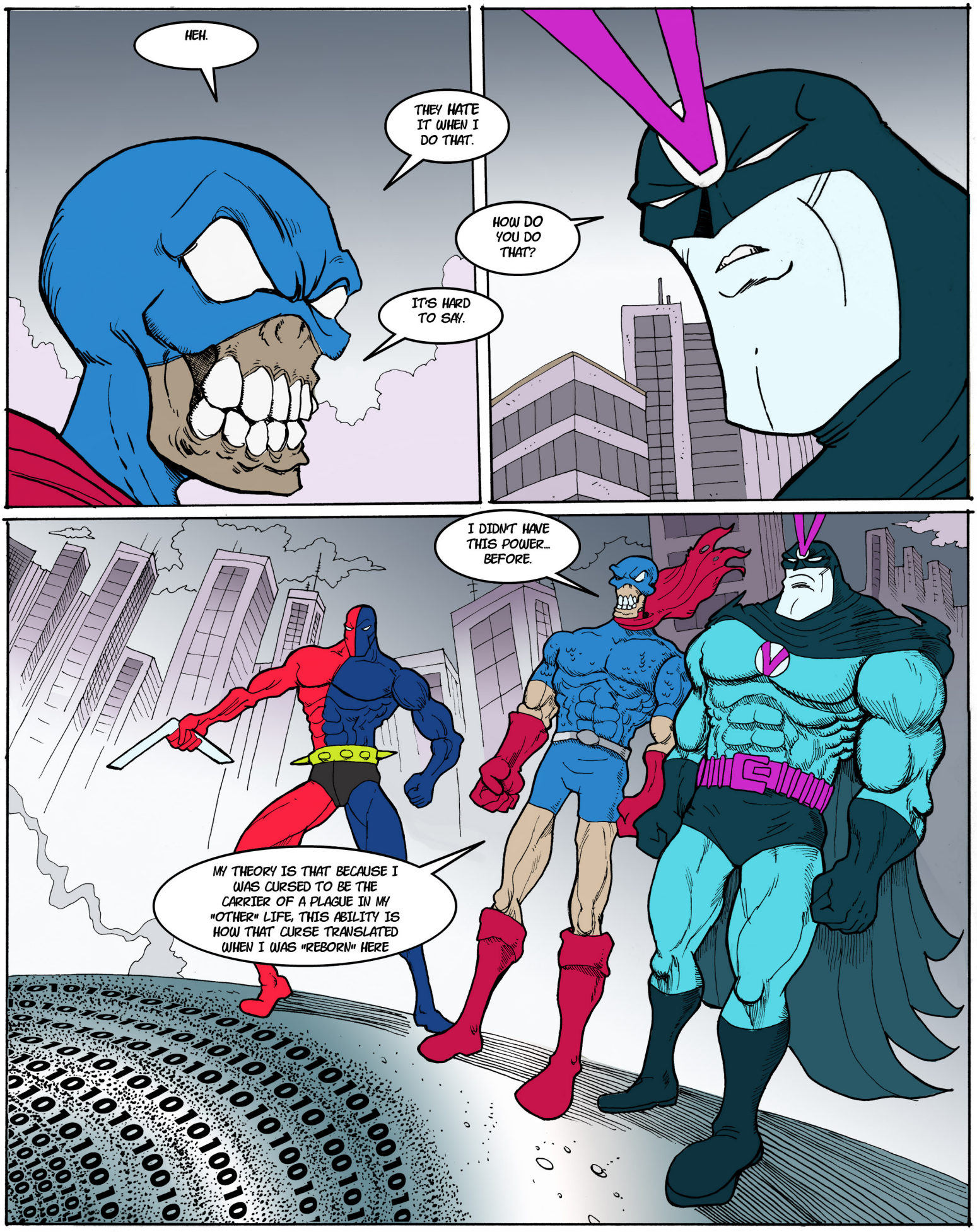

HEY, THE SAME THING COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO ME, ROY AND DENNIS IF I HADN'T FOUND OUR WAY HERE!
THE SAME THING COULD STILL HAPPEN TO YOU AND JIM IF YOU DON'T MAKE IT BACK!
FINE.
WHERE ARE THESE OTHER "MYSTERY MEN" YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?
THEM? OH, MOST WENT TO SUPERSTOWN.
SUPERSTOWN?
YES, IT'S A PART OF THE WORLD WHERE THOSE OF US WHO STILL LIKE TO WANDER AROUND IN SILLY COSTUMES CAN BLEND IN
YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO STAND OUT HERE.
WHY IS THAT?
BECAUSE WHOEVER RUNS THIS WORLD RUNS A VERY TIGHT SHIP INDEED.
IF THEY CAN'T ACCOUNT FOR YOUR EXISTENCE HERE, THEY'LL SEND TECH SUPPORT AFTER YOU
AND IF THAT HAPPENS, YOUR EXISTNECE WON'T BE AN ISSUE FOR LONG.
rrrrrummmmmble!

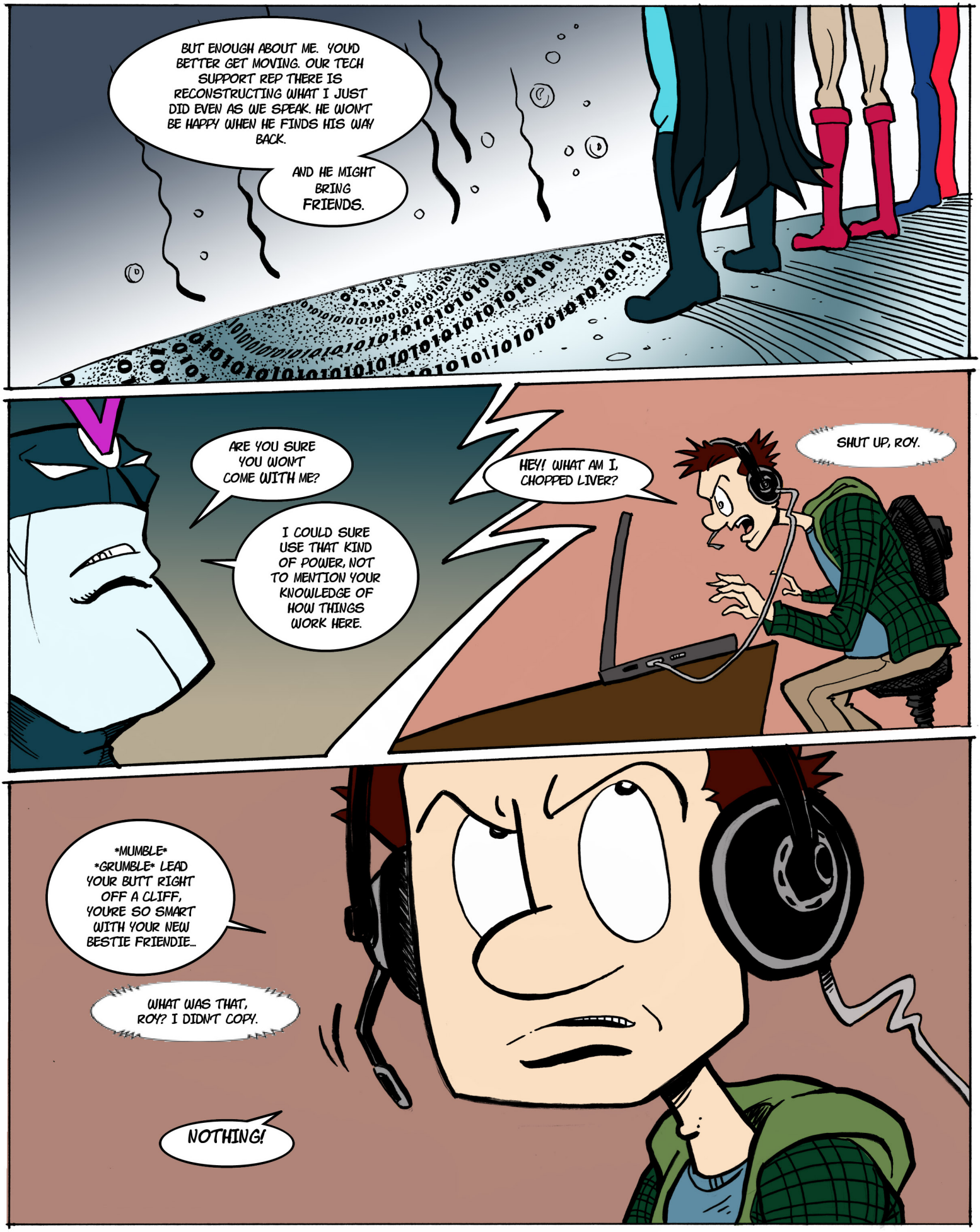
ONE THING I'VE NOTICED SINCE BECOMING A HERO...
WHEN PEOPLE SAY OMINOUS THINGS LIKE THAT, BAD STUFF STARTS HAPPENING RIGHT ON CUE.
those r the guyz, dude!
they knocked me offline n some1 OWEZ me, dawg! LOL!
WELL, THIS ISN'T GOOD AT ALL.

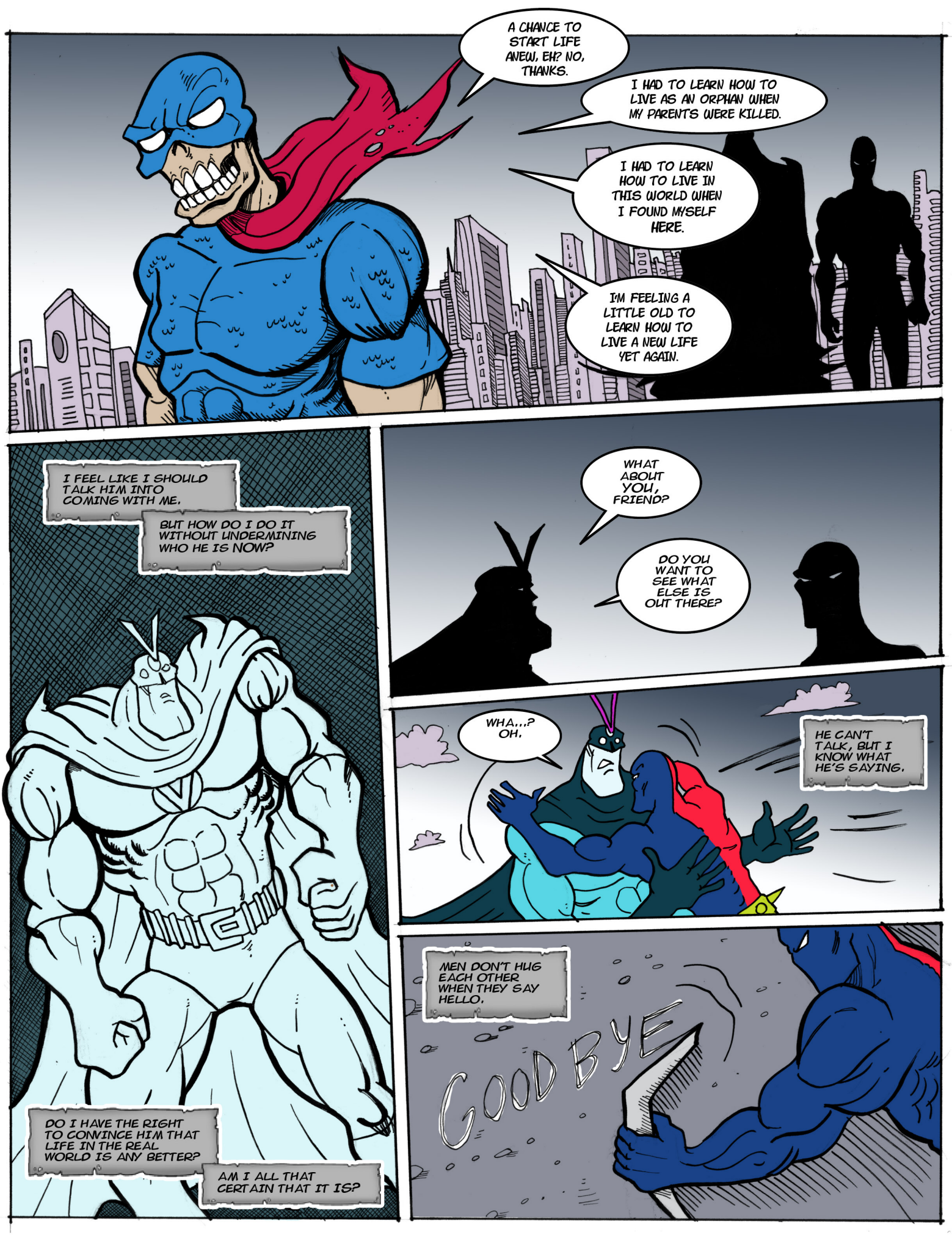

u don't have Mobster City profiles.
u will b deleted.
whomp!
"DELETED" MEANS "KILLED," SO WATCH YOURSELF!
LIKE I COULDN'T PUT THAT TOGETHER.
THAT TRICK YOU DID ON ME EARLIER? WILL IT WORK ON HIM?
NOT EASILY. THIS THING IS PART OF TECH SUPPORT.
THEY COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES, ALL OF THEM HOMICIDAL.
AND THIS WORLD BELONGS TO THEM!


I CAN SEE WHY JIM GOT OUT OF TOWN WHEN TECH SUPPORT CAME CALLING.
THOOMP!
LOL! that's right, lsrs! u all gonna PAY for messin wit MY game!
KA-WANGITY!
aw, MAN! SRSLY?


WOOT! WOOT! WOOT!
RUMBLE RUMBLE!
HEY!
when I get my hands on u guys, ur going 2 b SO banned!!!
SLOOOOOSH!

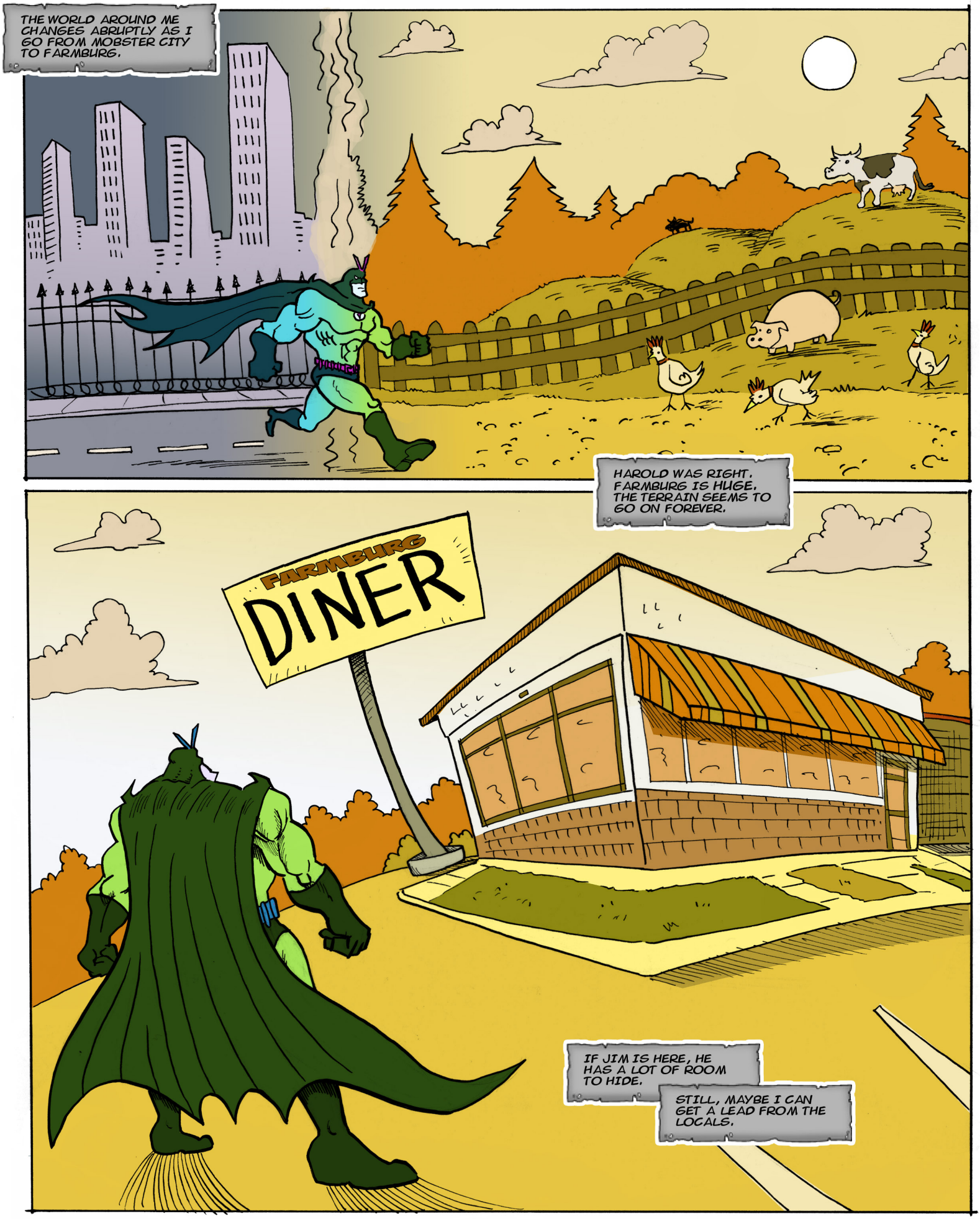

HEH.
THEY HATE IT WHEN I DO THAT.
HOW DO YOU DO THAT?
IT'S HARD TO SAY.
I DIDN'T HAVE THIS POWER... BEFORE.
MY THEORY IS THAT BECAUSE I WAS CURSED TO BE THE CARRIER OF A PLAGUE IN MY "OTHER" LIFE, THIS ABILITY IS HOW THAT CURSE TRANSLATED WHEN I WAS "REBORN" HERE


BUT ENOUGH ABOUT ME. YOU'D BETTER GET MOVING. OUR TECH SUPPORT REP THERE IS RECONSTRUCTING WHAT I JUST DID EVEN AS WE SPEAK. HE WON'T BE HAPPY WHEN HE FINDS HIS WAY BACK.
AND HE MIGHT BRING FRIENDS.
ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T COME WITH ME?
I COULD SURE USE THAT KIND OF POWER, NOT TO MENTION YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF HOW THINGS WORK HERE.
HEY! WHAT AM I, CHOPPED LIVER?
SHUT UP, ROY.
MUMBLE *GRUMBLE* LEAD YOUR BUTT RIGHT OFF A CLIFF, YOU'RE SO SMART WITH YOUR NEW BESTIE FRIENDIE...
WHAT WAS THAT, ROY? I DIDN'T COPY.
NOTHING!


A CHANCE TO START LIFE ANEW, EH? NO, THANKS.
I HAD TO LEARN HOW TO LIVE AS AN ORPHAN WHEN MY PARENTS WERE KILLED.
I HAD TO LEARN HOW TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD WHEN I FOUND MYSELF HERE.
I'M FEELING A LITTLE OLD TO LEARN HOW TO LIVE A NEW LIFE YET AGAIN.
I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD TALK HIM INTO COMING WITH ME.
BUT HOW DO I DO IT WITHOUT UNDERMINING WHO HE IS NOW?
DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO CONVINCE HIM THAT LIFE IN THE REAL WORLD IS ANY BETTER?
AM I ALL THAT CERTAIN THAT IT IS?
WHAT ABOUT YOU, FRIEND?
DO YOU WANT TO SEE WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE?
WHA...? OH.
HE CAN'T TALK, BUT I KNOW WHAT HE'S SAYING.
MEN DON'T HUG EACH OTHER WHEN THEY SAY HELLO.
GOOD BYE

A DRY-ERASE BOARD OR SOMETHING.
IF I EVER COME BACK, I'M BRINGING YOU SOMETHING TO WRITE ON.
THERE'S A CAFE BETWEEN HERE AND FARMBURG. YOU MAY WANT TO STOP THERE AND ASK AROUND TO SEE IF ANYONE KNOWS WHERE YOUR FRIEND IS.
FARMBURG IS HUGE. YOU COULD WANDER AROUND THERE FOR YEARS AND NEVER FIND HIM!
I WILL, THANKS, HAROLD.
HEY!!
you jerks are making me WORK LATE!!! :-(
HE IS NOT HAPPY.
WE'LL HOLD HIM OFF. GOOD LUCK!

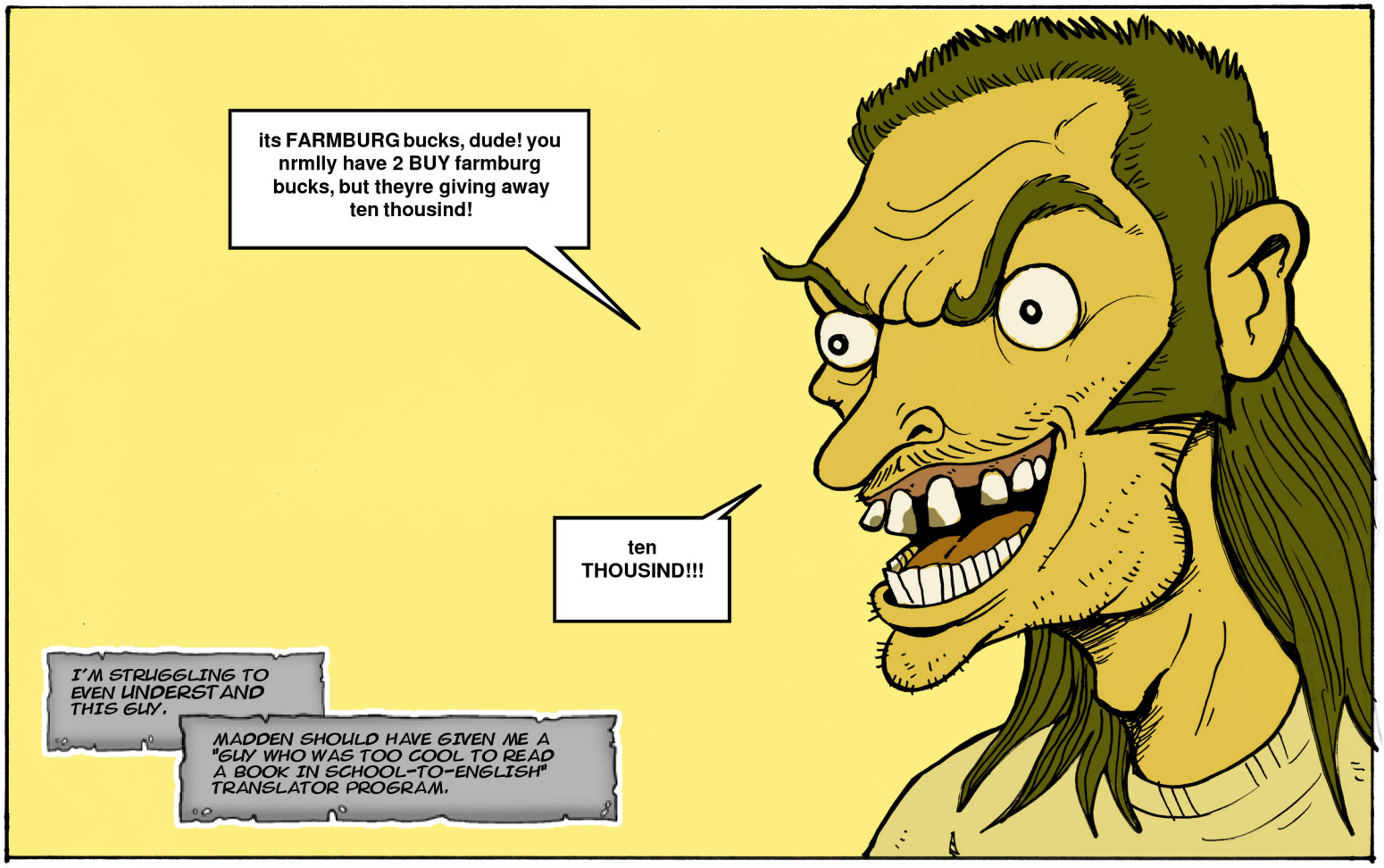
I TELL MYSELF THEY MADE THEIR CHOICE TO STAY.
BUT A MUCH LOUDER VOICE TELLS ME I SHOULD HAVE TRIED HARDER TO TALK THEM OUT OF IT.


THE WORLD AROUND ME CHANGES ABRUPTLY AS I GO FROM MOBSTER CITY TO FARMBURG.
HAROLD WAS RIGHT. FARMBURG IS HUGE. THE TERRAIN SEEMS TO GO ON FOREVER.
FARMBURG
DINER
IF JIM IS HERE, HE HAS A LOT OF ROOM TO HIDE.
STILL, MAYBE I CAN GET A LEAD FROM THE LOCALS.

IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG TO FIGURE OUT I'M IN THE RIGHT PLACE.
NOW TO DO A LITTLE RECON. THE TRICK IS TO FIND SOMEONE WHO HAS NO REAL LIFE AND TRIES TO MAKE UP FOR IT BY SPENDING ALL THEIR TIME IN THIS ONE.

AND, HELLO!
THESE GUYS LOOK LIKE THEY HAVEN'T KNOWN THE TOUCH OF A WOMAN IN A LOOONG TIME.

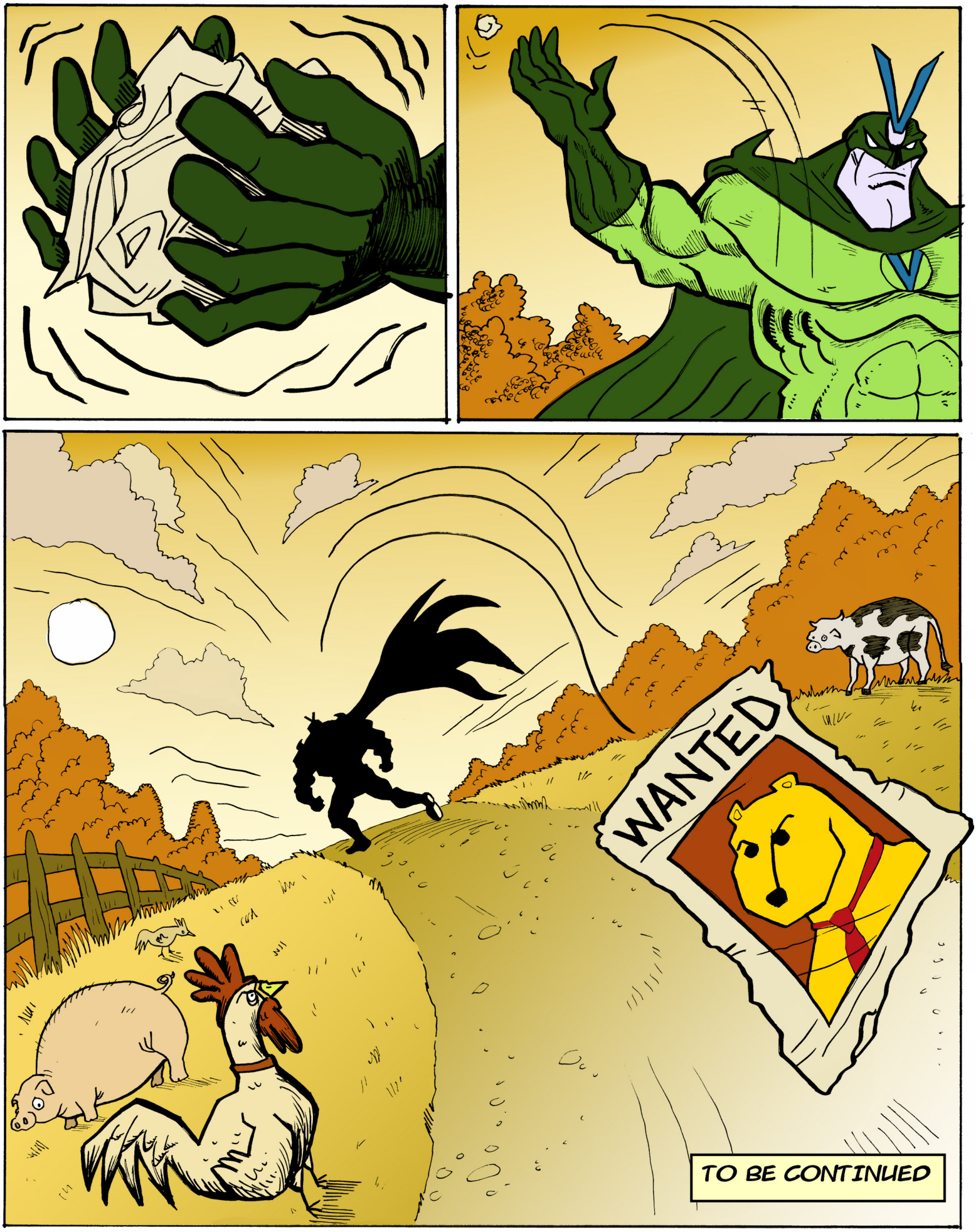
AND IT TURNS OUT I'M RIGHT. ALWAYS BET ON THE GUY WITH THE MULLET.
dude, theyre giving ten thousind famburg bucks if u kill that thing! thats like a hundrid bucks worth!!!
BUBBA
WAIT. TEN THOUSAND BUCKS IS ONLY WORTH A HUNDRED?


its FARMBURG bucks, dude! you nrmlly have 2 BUY farmburg bucks, but theyre giving away ten thousind!
ten THOUSIND!!!
I'M STRUGGLING TO EVEN UNDERSTAND THIS GUY.
MADDEN SHOULD HAVE GIVEN ME A "GUY WHO WAS TOO COOL TO READ A BOOK IN SCHOOL-TO-ENGLISH" TRANSLATOR PROGRAM.

SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT: I BUY THEIR PLAY MONEY WITH MY REAL MONEY?
well, yeah. of course!
BUBBA
AND I CAN ONLY SPEND THAT PLAY MONEY HERE ?
um... yeah. derp!
BUBBA
SO, INSTEAD OF KEEPING MY REAL MONEY AND BUYING REAL THINGS WITH IT IN THE REAL WORLD, I GIVE IT TO THE PEOPLE RUNNING THIS LITTLE GAME AND BUY THINGS HERE THAT DON'T REALLY EXIST?
dude, u r rlly taking all the fun out of it. >:-(
BUBBA
besides, this give u FREE farmburg bucks!
all uve got 2 do is find this baer and KILL it!!!

ya. it's like when a calf wanders into ur farm. u get bonuses for that kind of stuff. :-)
ive never seen a bonus this big be4 tho!
the post said its been destrouying peeples farms, so ur suppost 2 find it n kill it!
BUBBA
wee'd better get on it, dude!
if every1 on Farmburg is lookin for it, it isnt gonna last long!
BUBBA
true dat! lets go KILL US A BAER! LOL!

I WATCH THE FUTURE OF AMERICA GO OUT TO SHOOT A FAKE "BAER" FOR FAKE MONEY.
BUT BEFORE I CAN GET TOO SMUG..
I REALIZE I'VE BEEN FOCUSING TOO MUCH ON THE FAKE REWARD.
XIT
AND NOT ENOUGH ON WHAT THE REWARD IS FOR.


WANTED
TO BE CONTINUED